

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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Rec'd INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINING AUTHORITY

PCT

To:

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NOTIFICATION OF TRANSMITTAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Rule 71.1)

Date of mailing

(day/month/year)

20.07.2004

Applicant's or agent's file reference
MR/38022

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.
PCT/GB 03/02767

International filing date (day/month/year)
27.06.2003

Priority date (day/month/year)
28.06.2002

Applicant

ALPHA THAMES LTD et al.

1. The applicant is hereby notified that this International Preliminary Examining Authority transmits herewith the international preliminary examination report and its annexes, if any, established on the international application.
2. A copy of the report and its annexes, if any, is being transmitted to the International Bureau for communication to all the elected Offices.
3. Where required by any of the elected Offices, the International Bureau will prepare an English translation of the report (but not of any annexes) and will transmit such translation to those Offices.
4. **REMINDER**

The applicant must enter the national phase before each elected Office by performing certain acts (filing translations and paying national fees) within 30 months from the priority date (or later in some Offices) (Article 39(1)) (see also the reminder sent by the International Bureau with Form PCT/IB/301).

Where a translation of the international application must be furnished to an elected Office, that translation must contain a translation of any annexes to the international preliminary examination report. It is the applicant's responsibility to prepare and furnish such translation directly to each elected Office concerned.

For further details on the applicable time limits and requirements of the elected Offices, see Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

The applicant's attention is drawn to Article 33(5), which provides that the criteria of novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability described in Article 33(2) to (4) merely serve the purposes of international preliminary examination and that "any Contracting State may apply additional or different criteria for the purposes of deciding whether, in that State, the claimed inventions is patentable or not" (see also Article 27(5)). Such additional criteria may relate, for example, to exemptions from patentability, requirements for enabling disclosure, clarity and support for the claims.

Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:



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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference MR/38022	FOR FURTHER ACTION See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/PEA/4-16)	
International application No. PCT/GB 03/02767	International filing date (day/month/year) 27.06.2003	Priority date (day/month/year) 28.06.2002
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC E21B43/017		
Applicant ALPHA THAMES LTD et al.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet.

☐ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I ☒ Basis of the opinion
- II ☐ Priority
- III ☐ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
- V ☒ Reasoned statement under Rule 66.2(a)(ii) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI ☐ Certain documents cited
- VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
- VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 26.01.2004	Date of completion of this report 20.07.2004
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority: <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465 </div> </div>	Authorized Officer Bellingacci, F Telephone No. +49 89 2399-2784



**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. **PCT/GB 03/02767**

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)*):

Description, Pages

1-9 as originally filed

Claims, Numbers

1-18 as originally filed

Drawings, Sheets

1/2-2/2 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
- ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
- ☐ the claims, Nos.:
- ☐ the drawings, sheets:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. **PCT/GB 03/02767**

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)).

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims	3,4,8,9,11,12,16-18
	No: Claims	1,2,5-7,10,13-15
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims	17, 18
	No: Claims	1-16
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims	1-18
	No: Claims	

2. Citations and explanations

see separate sheet

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB 03/02767

Reference is made to the following documents:

D1 = US 4 052 703 A

D2 = GB 2 299 108 A

D3 = US 5 154 741 A

V - V - Reasoned statement under Art. 35(2) PCT

V-1 D1, which is considered as the closest prior art, describes a system for extracting subsea hydrocarbon fluid comprising at least three discrete subsea developments (w, fig. 1) for hydrocarbon extraction and a hydrocarbon receiving facility (P) linked by a pipeline network configured to permit:

- a) diversion of fluid from at least one of the subsea developments selectively to one or more of the other developments (lines L, fig. 1); and
- b) conveyance of fluid from each of the subsea developments to the receiving facility (col. 5, lines 15-18).

The subject-matter of claim 1 is therefore not new and the claim does not meet the corresponding requirement of Art. 33(2) PCT.

V-2 The subject-matter of claims 2, 5-7, 10, 13-15 is also not new. In particular:

cl. 2: see closed ring of pipelines I in fig. 1;

cl. 5, 6: see col. 5, lines 12-16;

cl. 7: see col. 10, lines 50-62;

cl. 10: see col. 6, lines 53-56;

cl. 13: see col 5, lines 25-31;

cl. 14, 15: see fig. 4

None of said claims meets therefore the novelty requirement of Art. 33(2) PCT.

V-3 It is known to provide a subsea satellite system with a plurality of receiving facilities, and to direct the effluent from any well to any of the receiving facilities (see D2, abstract). The subject-matter of claim 3 represents therefore an obvious alternative to the design known from D1 and the claim does not meet therefore the inventive step requirement of Art 33(3) PCT. As it should be also assumed that the control system according to D2 direct the fluid to the "best" storing place also the subject-matter of claim 11 does not involve an inventive step.

V-4 The subject-matter of claims 4 and 12 is obvious in the light of the combined teaching of D1 and D3, abstract and fig. 1.

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB 03/02767

- V-5 The subject-matter of claims 8, 9 and 16 appears to amount to standard design solutions.
- V-6 None of the cited documents teaches to convey fluid from a first subsea development to a second subsea development on the basis of "requirements" and "surplus" for / of a fluid type and therefore claim 17, together with dependant claim 18 meets the requirements of Art. 33(2) and (3) PCT.
- V-7 The following objections are also raised:
- a) The independent claims are not properly cast in the two part form, with those features which in combination are part of the prior art (D1) being placed in the preamble, contrary to the requirements of Rule 6.3(b) PCT.
 - b) The features of the claims are not provided with reference signs placed in parentheses (Rule 6.2(b) PCT).
 - c) Contrary to the requirements of Rule 5.1(a)(ii) PCT, the relevant background art disclosed in D1 to D3 is not mentioned in the description, nor are said documents identified therein.